THE MARBLES OF CONNEMARA.*

The Marbles of Connemara are worthy of a place in the foremost list of the beautiful productions of the earth. It is deeply to be regretted they are so little known.

The "kingdom" of Connemara—for thus was this wild region once styled, before the *curiosities* of good roads were introduced there,—embraces a wide expanse, extending from the old Spanish-built town of Galway to the harbour of the Killery. The mighty Loughs of "Corrib" and "Mask" form interesting features in the district.

In the immediate neighbourhood of Ballynahinch a quarry has been slightly worked, containing very beautiful varieties of green and often rose and white coloured marble. These, with similar found at Clifden, are the most beautiful in Connemara. Beyond the making of such ornaments as rings, brooches, seals, inkstands, and bottles, little has been done in its manufacture.

Occasionally one meets with a "slab" or "chimney-piece," but only often enough to create regret that so much real beauty lies for the most part neglected. I may perhaps be pardoned if I introduce a paragraph from an article I met with a short time since, and which observes,—"So far as stone is employed in large blocks for the construction of buildings, strength and durability are the chief qualities for which the material is valued; but when we have a substance such as marble, in which delicacy and purity of colour are combined with a susceptibility of receiving a high polish, and of being cut into elegant forms, a new measure of value is obtained, our notions of *taste* and *beauty* are at once appealed to, and the refining influence which objects of taste exert on mankind is shared by this substance in common with some others.

At Clifden, nine miles from Ballynahinch, other quarries yielding similar coloured marbles have also been slightly worked, but only slightly. It is in this town that all the ornaments are made. Clifden is an exceedingly pretty town, small and very clean; within two miles of it is Clifden Castle, the seat of Hyacinth Darcy, esq.: on one side the grounds rise to a perpendicular, against which the Atlantic throws up its waters. As a pleasing proof of unremitting industry and perseverance, it may be gratifying to give a brief sketch of the fancy workers of Connemara marble: they consist but of *two* men, Alexander and James M'Donnell (genuine Connaught men, although the name has a northern sound): they cut from the quarry with a chisel and mallet the portions of marble their ingenuity turns to such tasteful articles: their only working tools are a chisel, small saw, and files: with these they perform their work to the admiration of all visitors, if we may judge from the rapidity with which the articles are disposed of; and, taking into consideration their extreme toil, *their charges* are very moderate.

Unmistakeable proofs are to be found of the existence of marble in many parts of Connemara, besides the two I have alluded to. Nature invites man's art to bring it forth for his own benefit and a world's admiration. *Serpentine* and *talc* are greatly interwoven in all the rocks of Connemara, thus at once forming a distinguishing mark from any others of Ireland. Precious serpentine, of various shades of green and yellow, often striped and somewhat mottled, is met with, intermixed with the white and rose coloured marble; and so beautiful a marble does this then become, that I question much whether anything of the kind to surpass it can be found at home or abroad. It may not be generally known that the splendid chimney-piece presented to George IV. and now to be seen in the Carlton Club-house, came from a quarry in Connemara. In the vicinity of Outerard, between that town and Lough Corrib, very pure black marble is largely found, resembling much in appearance the undefiled black marble of Kilkenny. Black marble owes its colour to a slight admixture of iron; some has been found to contain five per cent. of that metal; notwithstanding which, the lime prepared from it was white; in time however it became an *ochrey* or *reddish* yellow colour.

The first process in working a quarry is "stripping,"—that is, in removing the limestone in beds or layers of one or two feet thick: here the aid of powder must be called in: a range of ground is laid out, and "stripping" is continued the entire length, until the beds of marble make their appearance: the rubbish, such as the so-called quarryings, namely, the small pieces, which are broken or chipped off from the different kinds of materials which are found, and wrought in quarries while they are undergoing their different preparations for various uses,—these substances when they are of the hard description, are extremely well calculated for the purpose of forming and repairing roads, as they are nearly, if not quite, in a state fit for immediate application in that way: hence it follows that materials of this kind ought not to be neglected, where they can conveniently be had, by those who have the care of roads, as they will save much expense and trouble in a great number of cases. Quarries are kept dry by draining and by pumps: in using the pumps, the water gained by cutting the drains may be of great use: however, I may add, without the aid of natural streams, which are capable of being converted to this purpose, it is rarely possible to find, by means of drains, a quantity of water sufficient to drive weighty machinery in a situation of proper height to have the full and necessary command of it.

Henry Bird.

* Condensed from a paper read at a recent meeting of the Kilkenny Scientific Institution.

NOTES IN THE PROVINCES.

Colchester.—A valuable collection of antiquities has been bequeathed to the town of Colchester by the late Mr. Henry Vint, on the very proper proviso that a fire-proof building shall be provided for their safe keeping within three years from the date of the bequest.

Pinner (Harrow).—A site has been purchased at Pinner, on which, within the next two years, a building will be erected for the Commercial Travellers' Orphan Schools, now at Wanstead. These schools were established in 1845, and have a sum at present in hand of 25,000*l.* with an annual income of 4,000*l.* The present building is inadequate to the increasing wants of the institution. Towards the cost of the new building, 10,000*l.* have already been collected.

Swindon.—The new market-house will be completed, it is thought, in about seven months. "Swindon," says the *Reading Mercury*, "is certainly making progress as regards architectural improvements. Besides new private houses and buildings, no less than three important public edifices will have been erected within the brief period of three or four years, viz. the New Church, the Savings' Bank in Victoria-street, and now the Market-House."

Sevenoaks.—The foundation-stone of a new Wesleyan chapel, adjoining the County Court-house here, was laid on Friday in week before last.

Ouse (Newbury).—The chapel of St. Bartholomew in this village has been restored and reopened, and the graveyard added to it consecrated by the Bishop of Oxford. The restoration has been effected under the direction of Mr. Hugall, of Cheltenham, and from plans furnished by him. A stone bell cot has been placed on the west wall, and new windows, and an enlarged south doorway have been inserted. There are open benches and other fittings in oak, and open timbered roofs, a new chancel arch, and stained glass windows. The east window, of three lights, is filled with Wailes's flowered quarries; the two-light south window is made a memorial to four children of the incumbent, and contains subjects illustrative of our Lord's love for children, executed by Wailes. The floors are laid with Minton's tiles, and the windows in the nave are filled with Powell's glass. In addition to the cost of the restoration of the chancel, the vicar has also re-built the west wall, with its stone bell-cot. The parish have borne the cost of roof to nave, and the expense of the remainder was undertaken by Mr. W. Mount, of Wasing-place, and Mr. J. T. Wasey, of Prior's-court. The former has inclosed the graveyard with a wall at his own cost.

Chichester.—The new church recently erected in West-street, Chichester, for the subdeanery, was consecrated on Thursday week.

Winchester.—The ancient east window has now been restored by Mr. Edward Baillie, of Wardour-street, London. The window, as some of our readers may remember, comprises figures of Our Saviour and the Virgin, St. Swithin (Bishop of Winchester in the ninth century), St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, St. Andrew, and St. Paul, the prophets Jeremiah and Haggai, Bishops Wykeham and Fox, Ethelwold, Henry VII. (?), &c. &c. The tradition is, that the original window, representing the Day of Judgment, was destroyed during the Commonwealth, the angelic choir alone surviving, and that the present window was subsequently formed from other windows. "Mr. Baillie," says the *Gateshead Observer*, "profiting by his opportunity of examining the glass in the work of restoration, ascertained that it had been variously manufactured. The ruby, for instance, was of three kinds:—1. Half the thickness ruby, half white; 2. Ruby between two thin layers of white; 3. A thin coating of ruby on white. Purple glass was found to be formed of a layer of light blue on a layer of light ruby. In another instance, a layer of ruby was placed between two layers of light blue. Some of the colours were pot-metal, others flashed. Where yellow stain was used, the glass was more perfect than the surrounding portions, owing, it is supposed, to the greater resistance offered by the silver (of which the yellow stain is made) to the action of the atmosphere." It is to the Exhibition of 1851, according to the same authority, that Mr. Baillie is indebted for being selected to perform this task, the Dean of Winchester having chosen him as the artist who contributed the painted window "Shakspeare reading a Play to Queen Elizabeth and her Court."

Roehampton.—The foundation-stone of a new Roman Catholic chapel, in connection with the Convent of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, at Roehampton, was laid on Saturday week. This convent was formerly the residence of Lord Ellenborough, but for the last two years has been occupied as a convent. The chapel is intended to accommodate between 400 and 500.

Pembroke Dock.—"It is remarkable," says the *Nautical Standard*, "to what an amount the sale of refuse or waste timber rises at the monthly sale at Pembroke Dockyard. Some lots of valuable mahogany, which originally cost 90*l.* reached the unusual price of 12 guineas, and other lots went a few pounds lower—which cost the country some hundreds of pounds. There is a contractor for the purpose of executing repairs in this dockyard; and it is a fact, that the timber rejected as useless is again repurchased, in order to effect repairs in the very yard from which it has been rejected!"——According to the *Devonport Independent*, a new tower, designed by Mr. J. Clark, Board of Ordnance superintendent, has been completed on the Stark Rock, at the entrance to Milford Harbour, for the defence of the approaches to Pembroke Dockyard. It speaks of another of larger dimensions to be erected on a contiguous island.

Ross.—The noted spire of Ross Church, Herefordshire, has been greatly shattered by lightning in a recent storm, and now shakes in the wind so that the work of repair will be one of much danger, requiring a large outlay. The height of this spire is about 204 feet. Our contemporaries of the newspaper press have extensively circulated our last note on lightning conductors, which it is to be hoped may do some good.

Swaledale.—The *Birmingham Journal* states that a number of houses here have been undermined and cracked to pieces, as if by earthquakes. The reckless and mercenary system of extracting the supports or pillars usually left in mines is said to have led to this, and the house owners look to the mine-worker for compensation.

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